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'This Week' Transcript 5-6-18: President Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and Stormy Daniels' lawyer Michael Avenatti

This is a rush transcript for "This Week" on May 6, 2018.

By ABC News
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Giuliani on when Trump learned of \$130,000 payment: 'Don't know and doesn't matter'
George Stephanopoulos interviews Donald Trump's new personal lawyer, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, durin... [Read More](#)

ANNOUNCER: This Week with George Stephanopoulos starts right now.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS, HOST: A This Week exclusive: Rudy Giuliani.

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We love Rudy.
He's a special guy.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The president's top attorney made headlines this week with that stunning revelation about hush money to Stormy Daniels.

RUDY GIULIANI, PRESIDENT TRUMP'S ATTORNEY: The president reimbursed that over a period.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Decimating Trump's previous denial.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Did you know about the \$130,000 payment?

TRUMP: No. No.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Unleashing a firestorm.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I love Rudy, but they better have an explanation for that. That's a problem.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And an unusual retreat.

TRUMP: Started yesterday. He'll get his facts straight.

GIULIANI: The facts. The facts I'm still learning.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So what are the facts? What did the president know about his lawyer's deal with Stormy Daniels? When did he know it? Is this case now as great a threat as the Russia investigation?

Plus...

TRUMP: I would love to see, but I have to find a way to be (inaudible).

STEPHANOPOULOS: Team Trump targets the special counsel as we learn what Mueller wants to ask the president and what he might do if the president refuses to comply.

Is this confrontation heading to the Supreme Court? Might Trump fire Mueller first? How will Rudy Giuliani handle the showdown?

All the tough questions ahead in our Sunday exclusive

Plus, a live response from the attorney for Stormy Daniels, Michael Avenatti, and analysis from our Powerhouse Roundtable

We'll break down the politics, smoke out the spin. The facts that matter this week

ANNOUNCER From ABC News, it's This Week. Here now chief anchor George Stephanopoulos

STEPHANOPOULOS Good morning. Let's get right to it. Our exclusive guest this week, the president's top attorney Rudy Giuliani. Mayor Giuliani, thanks for joining us this morning.

GIULIANI Good morning, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS The president said you didn't get the facts straight, so let's try to get some facts on the table to begin with. The president does acknowledge meeting Stormy Daniels, correct?

GIULIANI You know, I'm not really involved in the... in the Daniels thing. So I don't... I don't know. I mean, he denies that it happened. She has written a letter denying it.

STEPHANOPOULOS Well we do have a picture of them together, so the president

GIULIANI Well, it depends on kind of what you mean by met her. Right?

STEPHANOPOULOS Well, yes, there's the picture right there. I just want to get that fact on the table.

GIULIANI: Well it looks like my friend Donald Trump before he was president, but -- and that looks like the woman who was on Saturday Night Live last night.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That's right. But does...

GIULIANI: Now that's pretty -- I -- I think she -- she kind of -- god, if I were her lawyer I'd be very upset. Fame and fortune, let me make money. How is she damaged? She's become rich as a result of this. The \$130,000 doesn't mean anything. Boy, I wish that was my case.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So the president does deny any sexual relationship with Stormy Daniels?

GIULIANI: He has. I have not -- I'm not -- as I said, I'm not involved in that. But the reality is he denies it. She denied it. Then when -- when it was opportunistic, right before the election, she came forward and then of course the whole thing happened with Michael Cohen. And -- and it's history now because it wasn't a campaign anything that...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, but -- but let me just -- because you say it's history. When did the president first learn that Stormy Daniels wanted money to keep quiet about the relationship?

GIULIANI: Don't know and doesn't matter to me. What matters to me are two things. There are two relevant legal things, which is what my job is. Number one, it was not a campaign contribution because it would have been done anyway. This is the kind of thing that I've settled for celebrities and famous people. Every lawyer that does that kind of work has. And number two, even if it was considered a campaign contribution, it was entirely reimbursed out of personal funds, which I don't think we'll even get to, because the first one's enough. So...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well...

GIULIANI: Case closed -- case closed for Donald Trump. And I think for -- for Michael Cohen, who I think got a big boost with Judge Ellis's comments the other day.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well let's -- let's -- the other day you also told BuzzFeed, though, that at some point after the 2016 election, Michael Cohen had complained to some people that he hadn't been paid by Donald Trump. And then -- so then you said Cohen met with Trump and told him and Giuliani said that we'll cover your expenses, they work out this \$35,000 a month retainer after that. So -- so the president did know about this after the campaign?

GIULIANI: Can't say that. I mean, at some point, yes but it could have been recently, it could have been a while back. Those are the facts that we're still working on. And that -- you know, may be in a little bit of dispute. This is more rumor than it is anything else. But...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But that's what you said. You said that to BuzzFeed.

GIULIANI: But here's the -- but here's the -- well, yes, I mean that -- that's one of the possibilities and one of the rumors. The reality is...

STEPHANOPOULOS: You stated it as fact.

GIULIANI: Well, maybe I did. But I -- right now, I'm at the point where I'm learning, and I can only -- I can't prove that. I can just say it's rumor. I can prove it's rumor, but I can't prove it's fact. Yet. Maybe we will.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But -- but you've said as -- it -- you've said as a matter of fact on Hannity and BuzzFeed, you talked to the Washington Post about it.

GIULIANI: I don't know -- I don't know how you separate fact and opinion.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, it's...

GIULLIANI: When I state an opinion, I'll say this is my opinion. And when I state a fact, I'll say this is a fact.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You said the president worked out a retainer agreement with Michael Cohen after the election in order to repay him...

GIULIANI: No, no...

STEPHANOPOULOS: ...for the settlement to Stormy Daniels.

GIULIANI: The second part -- the second part of it -- the last part of it, the -- the retainer agreement was to repay expenses, which turns out to have included this one to the woman that you saw on Saturday Night Live last night, trying to make more money and now our NDA with her seems to be irrelevant because she wants to break it up because she wants to make a lot more money than \$130,000.

I never thought \$130,000 -- I know this sounds funny to people there at home. I never thought \$130,000 was a real payment, it's a nuisance payment. When I settle this -- when it was real or a real possibility, it's a couple million dollars, not -- not \$130,000.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you -- you -- you...

GIULIANI: People don't go away for \$130,000 of a meritorious claim.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You -- you did call it a settlement payment. The president did make these payments to Michael Cohen over the course of 2017, according to you. Then why did -- on April 5, why did the president deny any knowledge of the payments when in fact, he had made the payments? GIULIANI: Well I don't know -- I don't know when the president learned about it, he could have learned about it after or not connected the whole thing at -- at that time. The reality is those are not facts that worry me as a lawyer.

Those don't amount to anything, what -- what is said to the press. That's political. What matters to me as a lawyer is...

STEPHANOPOULOS It's OK to lie to the press?

GIULIANI Gee, I don't know, you you know a few presidents who did that I don't think that this president has done that But in any event, that's not the crime The crime is was it a campaign contribution, not a campaign contribution 100 percent, people want to avoid that conclusion because it gets them out of trouble and it makes the whole investigation and and the tactics that we use by the prosecutors totally repugnant

STEPHANOPOULOS But as you know, the law says that any payment in connection with the campaign could be considered something that has to be reported

GIULIANI Unless

STEPHANOPOULOS hold on, let me just finish the question and then you can respond Michael Avenatti, Stormy Daniels' lawyer, says there's a great deal of evidence, contemporaneous evidence at the time that they did in fact discuss the campaign

GIULIANI Michael Avenatti's going to say what he has to say to collect his money So I know he's coming on later and people can judge why the heck he let her go on Saturday Night Live if this is a serious case and not a comedy

But the reality is, here's the test, not of Michael Avenatti, not of me, but of the Campaign Finance Commission If it could be for any other purpose, even if the purpose is campaign, any other purpose, if a man buys a suit, if a woman buys a dress, it cannot be considered a campaign contribution Now this was for another purpose, to protect him, to protect his family It may have involved the campaign, it doesn't matter And it would've been done under any other circumstances, if there was no campaign and I can prove

STEPHANOPOULOS If that's the case, then why wasn't

GIULIANI and I can prove that it has been done on numerous times, not necessarily with President Trump, but with many other people that I and other lawyers have represented

STEPHANOPOULOS If it could have been done at any other time, this this became she gave an interview back in 2011 There was a blog post back in 2011 She was on radio shows earlier as well, why didn't the president make the payment earlier?

GIULIANI I don't know Maybe she didn't demand it earlier You're not going to pay if you're not if there's no demand I have I have no idea what the history of her representation was

I do think it's suspect that she waits until the very last minute with regard to the campaign, and where you could get the maximum personal damage against the president Back in 2011, he was he was a celebrity But he wasn't running for president of the United States

Now that adds to the situation, it doesn't create any additional motivation, though. Primary motivation is personal. A long history of doing that that she and Avenatti and the other lawyers don't have anything to do with, and I'm very comfortable with that part of the case, George.

(CROSSTALK)

It's the Mueller -- it's the Mueller part of the case that I came in for, not the -- that one's gone, that one's gone. I think if you asked the prosecutors off the record, they would tell you that's gone.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well there is -- we want to get to that because there were even interviews as late as this week where people said that it was clear to them coming out of those interviews that it wasn't gone.

But even the president's allies are having a -- are having a hard time -- having a hard time believing that Mr. Trump reimbursed Michael Cohen without knowing what it was for. Here's Andrew Napolitano on Fox.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANDREW NAPOLITANO, SENIOR JUDICIAL ANALYST, FOX NEWS: If Rudy wants the public to believe that Donald Trump reimbursed Michael Cohen \$130,000 and didn't know what it was for, didn't know that it was going to silence Stormy Daniels, that is unworthy of belief.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: How do you respond to Andrew Napolitano?

GIULIANI: Well the judge doesn't know the facts of the case. He knows less about the facts case than I do. Wonderful guy, Judge Napolitano. But he really shouldn't be speculating on facts that he doesn't know. And I think he would regret that if he he thought about it.

\$130,000 between a lawyer and a client and -- and a client who's worth, you know, billions, is not -- George, you know, I don't like saying this, but it's not a great deal of money.

\$1.3 million is a great deal of money. That's the kind of money you would think of as a settlement. If I saw \$130,000, I would never think it was to settle a substantial claims against my client.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Are you confident that Michael Cohen never told President Trump that I made this payment in order to have -- make a payment to Stormy Daniels?

GIULIANI: Number one, why would I be? And why would I be concerned when it's not campaign contribution. It -- it was done for other purposes in addition to possible campaign purposes. End of case.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you do acknowledge...

GIULIANI: It was repaid. End of case.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you acknowledge that Michael Cohen would tell the president this is what it's for?

GIULIANI: On October 15, 16, right before the election? \$130,000 payment when there were other -- I did make clear -- and I don't know what they are yet. I will know. There were other things involved that had nothing to do with Stormy Daniels. In other words, other amounts of money. This was not uncommon for him to do that.

So no, I would not -- I would not -- if I were him and I were the president's lawyer and I had done this in the past and it had worked out in the past, I would not go to him and bother him two weeks before the election with this thing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But certainly April 5, 2018 the president knew that Michael Cohen had made these payments, because he in fact had reimbursed Michael Cohen for it.

GIULIANI: I -- I don't know and I don't think it's at all relevant anymore. This is another tangent like, you know, chasing the Flynn tangent when it turns out that John Kerry is now violating the Logan Act and nobody seems to care. You haven't asked me about that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Even -- even if this was not a campaign finance violation...

GIULIANI: We missed John Kerry.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Right. Even -- even if you -- if this was not a campaign finance violation, as you say, this was a liability to Michael Cohen. Why didn't the president include that liability on his financial disclosure form?

GIULIANI: Well how could he if he didn't know it? Right? I mean, first of all, it isn't a liability, it's an expense I don't think those are included. So I'm representing the president, let's say And I came down to Washington this weekend That's a certain expense I'd bill him for it three months from now or two months from now That's not a loan He's not loaning me money I'm my law firm or I in this case, I, because I'm representing him individually, I lay out the money and then he pays me back Sometimes those expenses go on for a couple years

STEPHANOPOULOS But but then you even called it a settlement payment So this would be something that he owes Michael Cohen He didn't file his financial disclosure until June of 2017 He knew he had this liability to Michael Cohen He didn't include it on his financial disclosure form

GIULIANI But, George but it's not a loan, it's an expense You don't you don't include all legal fees or all legal payments on your financial disclosure form And how can you do it when you don't know about it? I don't think anyone believes that he knew about it at the time I think there's a question about when did he find out

STEPHANOPOULOS: No, but before June 2017, you've said that he made this agreement with Michael Cohen before June 2017 in order to pay him back.

GIULIANI: The agreement with Michael Cohen, as far as I know, is a longstanding agreement that Michael Cohen takes care of situations like this then gets paid for them sometimes. Gets paid -- sometimes it's reimbursed in another way. It depends on whether it's business or personal.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Is Michael Cohen still the president's attorney?

GIULIANI: No, of course not. It would be a conflict right now for him to be the president's attorney. I am in this respect. So is Jay Sekulow, so are the Raskins, and then of course he has White House Counsel. As you know from working in the White House, that's not quite your attorney, that's really the president -- the presidency's attorney.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Correct.

And -- and you've said he -- he -- this was a regular arrangement he had with Michael Cohen. So did Michael Cohen make payments to other women for the president?

GIULIANI: I have no knowledge of that but I -- I -- I would think if it was necessary, yes. He made payments for the president, or he conducted business for the president, which means he had legal fees, monies laid out, and expenditures, which I have on my bills to my clients.

STEPHANOPOULOS And are you confident that his testimony and the Stormy Daniels payment won't contradict the president?

GIULIANI Not in any material respect

Look, if it didn't contradict it at all, then somebody would be lying I remember that great cross examination when the person just repeated the things over and over again the same way Of course there'll be minor details

On the two main facts, was it for the was it for another purpose other than just campaign, even if it was campaign? Yes It was to settle a personal issue that would be embarrassing to him and his wife Number two, did he repay it over a period of time and then find out ultimately what it was about? Yes

STEPHANOPOULOS They had

GIULIANI I'm comfortable with that That's 100 percent That's why these people who think they're chasing this down are are involved in the same witch hunt that Judge Ellis was so concerned about with Mueller

STEPHANOPOULOS They had dinner in March, a phone call two weeks ago, any other communication? And are you sure they didn't discuss the Stormy Daniels payment during these conversations?

GIULIANI: I -- I don't think it's a good idea for the -- for the two of them to talk right now, eventually they can. They are very good friends. I kind of miss Michael's advice. I think Jay does also.

But right now, the best thing to do is through the lawyers. We have a very good relationship with his two lawyers. And we're going to continue to -- to do that, and that has worked out for us.

If they had conversations before this, no harm. I mean, again that part of the case, George, I am very comfortable, is gone. I got to focus my attention on the -- on the Mueller -- on the Mueller part.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Are you concerned at all that Michael Cohen's going to cooperate with prosecutors?

GIULIANI: No. I expect that he is going to cooperate with them. I don't think they'll be happy with it because he doesn't have any incriminating evidence about the president or himself.

The man is an honest, honorable lawyer. And despite the Times article today, which is totally baseless, as far as I can tell, but you know, that's his lawyer's issue where they had to help. My issue is getting up to speed on the facts here. I'm about halfway there.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And has the president or any member of the president's team ever suggested to Michael Cohen in any way that the president would pardon him if he were indicted or convicted?

GIULIANI: That -- that -- we -- Jay and I have made it clear, and -- and Michael's lawyers all know that that obviously is not on the table. That's not a decision to be made now. There's no reason to pardon anybody now.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So it hasn't been discussed?

GIULIANI: It has not been discussed. And -- and would not be discussed. Does the president have the unfettered power, as President Clinton had, President Reagan? I used to -- I -- used to have the pardon attorney worked for me with President Reagan. He gave out 900 pardons, far fewer than -- than Obama or -- or President Trump.

I'm -- I'm a big believer in the pardon power. There are people I want to see get pardons like Michael Milken, who I prosecuted. But right now, pardons would be a bit -- they wouldn't be illegal to talk about, they'd be kind of confusing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And let's talk about the Mueller investigation. The president said again on Friday that he wants to speak with Mueller, answer his questions. So are you prepared to make that happen?

GIULIANI: Not -- not after the way they've acted. I came into this case with a desire to do that, and -- and they just keep convincing not to do it. First they leak the questions. Then they do this whole thing with...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well let -- let me just stop you right there, because in fact -- in fact those -- those questions were written by Jay Sekulow after a meeting with Mueller and his team. And these were the -- your impression, the impression of the Trump team's take on the questions, and in fact it was a document made by the Trump team.

It wasn't something leaked by Mueller.

GIULIANI: It wasn't something leaked by us, I know that. I mean I -- look, it may not have been -- first of all I don't think Bob Mueller leaks, let's be clear about that. I think that people on a lower -- I don't think his -- his top guys leak or women, I think people below leak and a lot of people saw these different documents.

Could it have been somebody formerly on our side? Could it have been somebody formerly on theirs? I don't know. Main fact is I don't care. My client's prejudiced by that, but in a way we were helped by it.

So I guess that's why they suspect us. But we were helped inadvertently. We're helped because it shows he has no case. Three main issues, right, one is was there collusion? Come on, nobody believes anymore there was collusion.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Several questions on that list about collusion.

GIULIANI: Well there were questions about it because they don't have any answers, right. They don't -- they wouldn't have to ask us if they had answers, right.

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: I know that you and the president keep on saying that, but Michael Caputo who is -- who has worked on the campaign just met with Mueller's team this week. He came out saying they asked a lot of questions about -- about collusion.

He came away quite concerned about Paul Manafort, Roger Stone, Rick Gates, and others.

GIULIANI: Maybe he's less concerned now after Judge Ellis gave a pretty good indication that he might toss the case for government misconduct, that he might not even have authority to conduct this investigation, might have to go back to the east district of Virginia.

I would think Mr. Caputo to rest a little bit easy. Although the man has been tortured. He's a -- he -- he's one of the people that, you know, has to be looked at for some kind of compensation here. The man has been tortured. And what he's saying is they asked a lot of questions, but that doesn't mean they know anything?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mayor, if the president has done nothing wrong, as you say, again and again, and he tells the truth.

GIULIANI: He hasn't done anything wrong, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I know -- and if he tells -- and he tells the truth, as you would advise him to do, what is the danger in answering Robert Mueller's questions?

GIULIANI: Because, they're trying to trap -- you can't -- you couldn't put a lawyer on this show, who wants to keep his law license, to tell you he should testify.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But it's only a trap if the president doesn't tell the truth.

GIULIANI: No, it isn't. It's only prosecutable if they have some built up, manipulated evidence to prove the president didn't tell the truth. How often has that happened?

STEPHANOPOULOS: If you have evidence that proves he doesn't tell the truth, then the president didn't tell the truth.

GIULIANI: No. People do things like lie. People lie. Could Comey be lying? Your damn right he could be lying, George. And we're going to walk ourselves into a trap like that? I couldn't...

STEPHANOPOULOS: If Mr. Comey lied to the special counsel then he is the one who is vulnerable to perjury. If the president tells the truth...

GIULIANI: But you've got to prove...

STEPHANOPOULOS: ...then he's not.

GIULIANI: And the special counsel has to be open to believing that. The special counsel so far seems to think that Comey is Moses. And I happen to think Comey is Judas.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you believe the president is telling the truth. If you believe that, if you have that conviction, you're his attorney. Why don't you say go in, talk to Robert Mueller. Tell the truth.

GIULIANI: Because I wouldn't be an attorney if I did that, George, I'd be living in some kind of unreal fantasy world that everybody tells the truth. I'm not going to set -- they don't have a case on collusion. They don't have a case on obstruction, which is why they're asking all these cockamamie questions about what do you feel, what do you think. I'm going to walk him into a prosecution for perjury like Martha Stewart did? I mean, she'd tell you...

STEPHANOPOULOS: She didn't tell the truth.

GIULIANI: Martha Stewart would tell you that she told the truth and they set her up. I don't know that, but I don't want to get into that case. I don't know.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Right. But what happens if Robert Mueller subpoenas the president? Will you comply?

GIULIANI: Well, we don't have to. He's the president of the United States. We can assert the same privilege as other president's have. President Clinton negotiated a deal in which he didn't admit the effectiveness of the subpoena. They withdrew it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah, but he did testify -- yeah, but he did testify before the grand jury. Is the president willing to do that?

GIULIANI: But only for two-and-a-half hours, only with an arranged format. Would we be willing to do that? I would rather have the Hillary Clinton treatment.

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeha, I think President Clinton was before the...

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: But I would rather have the Hillary Clinton.

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... more than two-and-a-half hours.

GIULIANI: No, he was two-and-a-half hours in the grand jury, approximately, maybe three. We'll say three. But Hillary Clinton treatment is what I'm looking for. And that is no under oath, only a Q&A, and then we get the questions in advance, and they write the report two weeks before.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, you -- he has briefed you on the topics he wants to discuss. Are you confident the president will not take the Fifth in this case?

GIULIANI: How can I ever be confident of that? When I'm facing a situation with the president and all the other lawyers are, in which every lawyer in America thinks he would be a fool to testify, I've got a client who wants to testify, please, don't -- he said it yesterday.

And, you know, Jay and I said to ourselves, my goodness, you know, I hope we get a chance to tell him the risk that he's taking. So he may testify. And we may actually work things out with Bob Mueller, because working with him directly is good.

But if they keep undermining it. And we have situations like Judge Ellis saying that they're out of control and they're not authorized, and they refuse to give the judge their authorization, what's going on with that, George? God almighty.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Final question, do you still want Rod Rosenstein to shut down this investigation?

GIULIANI: I do. I believe that after Judge Ellis's remarks last night -- yesterday, rather, on Friday, there's no question that the amount of government misconduct is accumulating. I happen to believe it's greater than anybody realizes. Very embarrassing to my former Justice Department.

And very embarrassing not to FBI agents, please, nobody attack an FBI agent, the Justice Department lawyers who are attacking the former leadership of both organizations.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. Giuliani, thanks for your time this morning.

GIULIANI: George, you're always fair, thank you.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Take care.

Stormy Daniels's attorney Michael Avenatti responds live next. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Stormy Daniels on Saturday Night Live last night, we're joined now by her attorney. Michael Avanatti joins us live from Las Angeles this morning. Mr. Avenatti, thanks for joining us this morning.

You heard Mayor Giuliani say he thought you made a big mistake allowing your client to go on Saturday Night Live last night. He thinks this hurts your case.

MICHAEL AVENATTI, LAWYER: No, I -- I think that's ridiculous. I mean Donald Trump went on Saturday Night Live during the election. I -- I don't think it hurt our case at all.

But I just want to make sure, George, did that interview just happen? I mean I'm not being spoofed, right?

STEPHANOPOULOS: You heard -- you heard the whole thing, what's your reaction?

AVENATTI: It's an absolute unmitigated disaster for Rudy Giuliani and the president. It's a train wreck. I can't believe that that actually just happened. I mean what we witnessed by Rudy Giuliani may be one of the worst T.V. appearances by any attorney on behalf of a client in modern times.

He now expects the American people to believe that he doesn't really know the facts, that as to every key question you asked, he hasn't communicated with the president about it. I mean this guy's all over the map over the last 72 hours on some very simple facts that should be very straightforward.

I think it is obvious, George, to the American people that this is a cover up, that they are making it up as they go along, they don't know what to say because they've lost track of the truth.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well let's try to break down some of those points right there. Number one, do you have evidence that this was in fact a campaign related payment? We know the timing of it, but do you have other evidence, any communication between Michael Cohen and -- and your client?

Any communication between Michael Cohen and the president that demonstrates this is connected to the campaign?

AVENATTI: There is significant amount of evidence, there is no question that this had everything to do with the campaign. In fact, if you go back and replay that interview, and that will be done I'm confident, and if you look at the answers, you're going to find an inconsistency with what Rudy Giuliani just told you.

Early in the interview he told you it has nothing to do with the campaign, later in the interview you asked him if there was going to be inconsistencies between Michael Cohen's testimony and Donald Trump and he equivocated.

He basically said that well it may have had something to do with the campaign, but it also has to do with personal issues. There's no question this had everything to do with the campaign. You could look at the timing associated with the payment.

The president could have paid this money or Michael could have paid the money or negotiated this in 2007, '08, '09, '10, '11, '12, '13.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Let me stop you there though, because one of the points that Rudy Giuliani made was that it was your client who was pressing for it in -- in -- during the campaign because that's when it was most valuable.

AVENATTI: That's -- that's absolutely false, that is not what happened, my client was preparing to tell her story, my client did not approach Michael Cohen, did not have anyone approach Michael Cohen, Michael Cohen approached my client in her council in an effort to shut her up in the days before the election. And that's --

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you can prove that?

AVENATTI: Yes. Absolutely. 100 percent. I wouldn't be sitting here on television if I couldn't, George. And look, all you have to do is look at what just happened in that interview to know that their attempting to snow (ph) the American people and when the facts and the evidence come out this is going to be a disaster for Michael Cohen, the president and now Rudy Giuliani. It is time for Rudy Giuliani to be put out to pasture.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you have any evidence that President Trump knew in real time about this agreement about this payment?

AVENATTI: George, we have evidence that the president knew in the -- in the months at least following the campaign of this payment, certainly knew it long before his statement on Air Force One in April of this year where he effectively stood there and lied to the American people about not knowing anything about this payment. And then of course Rudy Giuliani a few days ago goes out and contradicts that.

And now they're trying to claim that Rudy Giuliani doesn't know the facts. I mean, any attorney that's worth anything could have a 30 minute meeting or conversation with his client and get to the bottom of this. This is not a complicated matter that takes months or years to get to the bottom of, George. I mean, this is absurd.

STEPHANOPOULOS: One of the other points we made with Rudy Giuliani, he said he didn't have any knowledge of payments made by Michael Cohen to other women but he -- but he couldn't rule it out either and has (ph) said that the payments might have been made if necessary. Do you have any evidence of any other -- that any other women were paid by Michael Cohen or other agents of the president?

AVENATTI: Women have come forward and contacted our office, George, as I've stated in the past. And we haven't completed vetting those stories but I think at the end of the day, there's going to be evidence of such payments. But I think it's also important to go back and -- and think about what we've just heard and what we've heard the last few days.

According to Rudy Giuliani, this was basically commonplace. The president had effectively an extramarital affair slush fund that was administered by Michael Cohen and that he would just be expected to take care of these things. They were a regular occurrence. I mean, that in and of itself should be very disturbing. Most people of means, most people of wealth and celebrity, they don't have extramarital affair slush funds and the suggestion is insulting.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That may -- that may be but in this case, isn't it possible that that would actually help the president's case in showing that he -- if he -- if he did indeed make other payments not connected to the campaign, that this was a regular occurrence for him and so this was just a pattern of practice for him and it was not connected to the campaign?

AVENATTI: Again, George, I don't think there's any question that this was connected to the campaign. You've got to look at the timing of it, you've got to look at the establishment of the LLC and when it occurred. I mean look, what they're trying to sell the American people is just not believable and they can't even keep their facts straight or their lies straight.

STEPHANOPOULOS: A few weeks back you put out that computer disk that you then did not reveal. I'm going to show that to our viewers right there. There, we see it right there. This picture's worth a thousand words. How many words is this worth? What is in that disk and when will you release it?

AVENATTI: Well George, I'm not going to disclose right now what's on the disk and we're going to be strategic and thoughtful about what evidence we're going to reveal and when. I mean, we've got a piece of litigation that we're in the middle of and I think that thus far, over the last few months we've been -- we've -- our batting average is -- is pretty high and we're going to be smart about it.

So I'm not going to disclose that right now. But what I will say is is that the more Rudy Giuliani talks, the more Michael Cohen talks, the more statements that the president gives on Air Force One, the better our case gets with each passing day.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you think that Rudy Giuliani in this and other interviews this week has waived attorney-client privilege with the president?

AVENATTI: Well, I think he might have. I mean, I -- and I don't think it was smart, the way that he's gone about doing this. I think he's done considerable harm to the president. I think his representation has been nothing short of a disaster and they would have been better off not saying anything than attempting to peddle what they've attempted to peddle over the last 72 hours, that's for sure.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Michael Avenatti, thanks for your time this morning.

AVENATTI: Thank you, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Lots of news to discuss from this morning's interviews with Rudy Giuliani, Michael Avenatti. The roundtable's going to analyze it all, next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: The "Roundtable" is ready to go. And all week long you can get the latest breaking news alerts on the ABC News app. Download it during the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JONATHAN KARL, CHIEF WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT, ABC: When the president so often says things that turn out not to be true, when (ph) the president in the White House show what appears to be a blatant disregard for the truth, how are the American people to trust or believe what is said here and what is said by the president?

SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: We give the very best information that we have at the time. I do that every single day and will continue to do that every day under this position.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And that was the briefing room the day after Rudy Giuliani's first interview on Hannity that set this all off this week. We're going to talk about it now with our Chief White House Correspondent Jon Karl, you just saw him ask that question.

Our Chief Political Analyst Matthew Dowd, Wall Street Journal Columnist and Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Jason Riley, and democratic strategist, former Clinton campaign spokesperson Karen Finney.

And -- and Jon, let's begin. I want to get back to that briefing later, but let's begin with these interviews. You're big takeaways, the big headlines.

KARL: Well I think what you're seeing now is a new war on Robert Mueller, a new war on the investigation. Mueller and the investigation are now central to the Trump mid term election strategy ad his re-election strategy.

They want to vilify, they want to delay this investigation, they want to draw it out, you'll see more interviews like this. They actually want this issue to be front and center because, George, they believe that the biggest motivator for the Trump base in the mid term elections will be fear of impeachment.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well again (ph), pretty clear from -- from that interview that the president isn't going to sit down with Robert Mueller any time soon (ph).

KARL: Absolutely not. If -- if there is subpoena, and I don't believe there will be, it'll be fought. They will -- they -- even if they believe they will lose, they will fight it just to draw it out -- draw it out as long as possible.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But Karen Finney, one of the other headlines right there, Rudy Giuliani did not rule out having the president take the fifth.

KAREN FINNEY, POLITICAL CONSULTANT: No, he did not, and it was something of a bizarre interview. I mean there are a number of things as we were just discussion, he sort of came out against the rule of law on (ph) ever speaking to a grand jury.

He ruled out taking the fifth, he seemed to suggest that maybe there was a slush fund and other women were paid. You know, look, I think the -- the reality here is they got caught telling the truth this week, and then I think we saw them trying to walk that back over the course of several days.

STEPHANOPOULOS: (Inaudible) that's the point, I mean Jason Riley, if you -- if you go back to Wednesday, clearly -- and maybe it was a mistake in strategy, but clearly on Wednesday night when Rudy Giuliani went on Hannity, he deliberately put out the idea that the president has reimbursed Michael Cohen even though there had been denial after denial (inaudible).

JASON RILEY, JOURNALIST, WALL STREET JOURNAL: And he spent 72 hours now in damage control and politically it's a very risky strategy. Jonathan, I -- going this route, you know, up until now this has been the story about a 10 year old affair with the president and the -- and Stormy Daniels.

Now we're insuring wall to wall coverage of the president and the porn star, and the -- the administration is not out there talking about their agenda. You had unemployment fall to rates -- you know, we -- we've rarely seen, you know, since World War II ended, but nobody's talking about the jobs numbers.

Nobody's talking about the economy, we're talking about this instead. I also think, George, that he is -- he's sort of taking his supporters for granted

here.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The president?

RILEY: The president. He put out a narrative there that he had not -- had no knowledge of this payment, his daughter Ivanka was defending this, Sarah Sanders was defending this, and now he's said we're going to put out their new -- a new strategy, and now I expect you to defend that as well.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well yes, this was just April 5th, this was not that long ago, this was one month ago the president said he knew nothing about it, completely blown up.

MATTHEW DOWD, POLITICAL ANALYST, ABC: Yes, it wasn't April of 2017, it was April of 2018 that he made this statement in this. I mean I -- first of all, I think Rudy has come so far from when he was a U.S. prosecutor basically prosecuting people like Bob Mueller is doing and like James Comey has (ph) been investigating, and now he's come so far field from that.

He were (ph) -- he basically is saying don't ever cooperate with people that work for the Justice Department in this. I'd just like to take a step back because you never hear a single person who speaks on behalf of the president ever use this argument.

The president is a man of integrity, he's trustworthy and honest and we should believe what he says. You never hear those statements, what you hear from them is well if he lied, he lied.

Everybody lies, that's how it is, this is how it goes. It wasn't really a campaign violation because he did it for personal reasons. Well even if it was a campaign violation, then -- then you can't prosecute him because he paid it back.

All of the statements in all of this, Stormy Daniels, or whatever happens to be completely -- to me -- points out the fact that we've not come to a position in our politics where people don't seem to think integrity matters anymore.

FINNEY: Well, or that we -- lying has become sort of normalized. I mean, the way that people talk about this administration, they talk about what happens daily in the White House briefing room as -- I mean, if the best answer that Sarah Sanders can give is I only have the best information that I have because she knows that her boss may be tweeting something that is totally the opposite of what she might be telling the American people.

I think part of the problem with that, though -- you know, I kind of go back to that's not news. What is news is what are the Republicans who are running for Congress, running for reelection going to do about it. I mean, all of this -- I think Rudy did his job this week if his job was to create a shiny object and take us away -- you're right, we're not talking about the jobs numbers.

We're also not talking about North Korea and the sort of danger of the idea that -- of President Trump sitting down with the North Korean leader and what could come of that. So I think -- you know -- again -- and we're also not talking about the idea that Rod Rosenstein -- this is a sort of Archibald (ph) --

(CROSSTALK)

DOWD: I want to go back to what John's question was, which happened at that briefing (ph) which I think is really important. I think we've come to a position now where almost everybody that deals with the White House or listens to the president, default position is it's probably not true. Which is a awful position for a White House and a president to be in.

Donald Trump for the past week -- and Albert Pujols both got to the 3,000 club. Albert Pujols did it for hits, Donald Trump did it for -- for lies.

(CROSSTALK)

DOWD: -- story in this (ph). And when you have an administration -- if you can't believe them on any of this, can you believe them on North Korea? Can you believe them on Iran? Can you believe them on Military exercises?

STEPHANOPOULOS: And that's going to be the question, is -- John, I -- and you and I were texting during that briefing the other day and it did seem to hit a new low in that briefing. Sarah Sanders either couldn't answer the questions and just punted, but also couldn't clean up what the president had said before. It almost gets to the point where you shrug your shoulders and say listen, we don't know what's true, what's not, we're not going to get the answer from the podium.

KARL: Well, what struck (ph) me is the first part of my question, I said when the president chose a flagrant disregard for the truth. She didn't take issue with that statement. She didn't challenge that statement because how many times has she had to get up there, has she been told a -- a bit of information, passed it on and it's turned out not to be true?

FINNEY: But again --

RILEY: I -- I do want to make one point about the -- the Manafort case that Rudy Giuliani made with the judge in that case. I -- I do think that that judge spoke for a lot of Trump supporters when he said that the Mueller investigation seems to have gone well past what it's mandate was here. And -- and this goes back to Rosenstein and that is where the real anger coming from conservatives and Trump supporters is.

It is at Rosenstein, because he is the one that is supposed to be overseeing Mueller and he has allowed to go off on these tangents and -- and their question is why doesn't he reign Mueller in. And then --

(CROSSTALK)

RILEY: -- keep alive (ph).

STEPHANOPOULOS: The judge -- the judge was asking questions there and I think one of the things you have to be careful about is -- is getting to the idea that the Judge was reaching conclusions, because one of the things the judge did there was say let me see the -- the document from Rod Rosenstein that gives the mandate to Paul -- to -- Robert Mueller.

RILEY: And they're very reluctant to show him that. And -- which feeds these suspicions among many of Trump's supporters that say this isn't really about Manafort, this is about taking down a president.

(CROSSTALK)

DOWD: The big difference is -- is that's how the justice system works, right?

FINNEY: That's right.

DOWD: A federal judge stands up there and asks questions, he asks questions in the prosecution, he's asked questions this (ph). He's saying I've waited (ph) -- I have questions about this. That's how it all supposed to work (ph). What you didn't see is people that support Bob Mueller in this come out and say the federal judge should be removed.

(CROSSTALK)

RILEY: -- you do have Rod Rosenstein out there chastising Congress. That's part of the --

(CROSSTALK)

DOWD: -- the Trump fan club and the Trump supporters basically every time they are confronted with something in the legal system and Justice Department, they basically say the Justice Department is filled with Storm Troopers, they're anti-American. What you saw with this is a federal judge stood up and said this is how it works, we're going to raise questions. And you don't see people that support Bob Mueller say fire the judge.

FINNEY: But they're also asking Rod Rosenstein for information that he can't give Congress because as we know, Congress also is not particularly trustworthy right now. It leaks like a sieve. So if you're trying to protect your case and the integrity of your case and do your job, which is what I see Rosenstein trying to do -- and again, while we're talking about Stormy Daniels, we're not talking about this -- you know, the fight about Rod Rosenstein and whether -- impeaching him?

I mean tomorrow the House of Representatives is going to try to impeach Rod Rosenstein for doing his job (ph)?

(CROSSTALK)

KARL: Rosenstein has job security right now. Because again, if you -- you talk about the low unemployment, 3.9 percent, the maneuvers with -- with North Korea, they do have issues to talk about but I'm telling you (inaudible) talk to somebody very key working on the Trump political strategy for the midterms. And the -- and the argument that was made is

we tried running on tax cuts and deregulation in these -- in these special elections and we got beat. The only way to really turn people out is fear and anger at what Democrats would do when they take over.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Right, but the -- the argument they're going to make, though, they're going to look back at 1998 and say that this was when Bill Clinton was getting impeached. And he actually picked up seats.

KARL: Democrats picked up seats in the midterm election.

DOWD: And his job approval numbers were at the highest point they had in the midst of the Monica Lewinsky...

STEPHANOPOULOS: It was a strong economy, as well.

But let me press the point on Rod Rosenstein's job security right there. That's the logical argument right there. Are you certain that the president's fortitude will last in the wake of another series of indictments from Robert Mueller, or a subpoena for his testimony, or perhaps a subpoena going after members of his family?

KARL: You cannot be sure of anything when it comes to Donald Trump, but, George, I am telling you that every senior person around the president, everybody who gives the president counsel on this, tells me he is not going to fire Rod Rosenstein, that he understand what it would mean and the disaster that would ensue, the political damage that Republicans would start fleeing from him on Capitol Hill.

But you just can't say for sure.

DOWD: George, one thing I want to go back to what something Rudy Giuliani said and many of the people that support Donald Trump, including Donald Trump has said. Basically, he's saying there's nothing here. We ought to get this over with. It ought to be done in this.

Benghazi was a four year investigation. There were zero indictments, right. Clinton email scandal was a two year investigation. There were zero indictments. This has been a 14 month investigation, there's been 23 indictments.

So, if you're going to make an argument that something hasn't existed, this is way far above and beyond what's happened in this.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I want to bring that question to Jason Riley, because you heard it again from Rudy Giuliani here, and we've heard it consistently from the president -- no collusion, no collusion, no collusion. That that conclusion has been reached. That defies every piece of evidence we've had from every person who has gone and talked to Robert Mueller's team.

RILEY: Well, we don't know. Mueller -- Giuliani also says that he doesn't think Mueller is a leaker, that his top agents are leaking in the case. We don't...

KARL After he said that the questions were leaked by Mueller. It was a very interesting

RILEY But that gets me back to what Judge Ellis said here, which is that he said to Mueller's team you do not have unfettered power here. You can't have unfettered power. You should be working within parameters. And many Trump supporters think that this is no longer about Paul Manafort's bank fraud or financial dealings, this is about doing whatever it takes to bring down Donald Trump. And people are very concerned about that. Trump supporters are very concerned that Mueller has not kept his eye on the ball, that he's gone outside of his mandate and that latitude has been given to him by Rod Rosenstein.

FINNEY But that goes to, Jon, what you were also talking about. If we talk about 2018, that is about firing up the Trump base to try to turn them out in 2018 when, you know, Democrats have already put it on the table. This is not going to be about impeachment, that's not what they're going to run on.

I do think, though, rather than sort of popping the champagne about a blue wave, it is time for the Democrats to actually focus on a message we in 2006, talked about the culture of corruption. I think they could talk about a culture of corruption on steroids here and how it is the Republicans in congress who are protecting this president. You know, they are trying to halt the Russia investigation. They are protecting all the various things that we he is doing. That's closer to a winning message than trying to than letting the Republicans make it about impeachment.

STEPHANOPOULOS One of the questions can anything else break through at this time?

But Matthew Dowd, one of the things you know, during this period and there's been a lot of talk about Russia, a lot of talk about Stormy Daniels, the president's approval rating has been going up. The Democrats have actually lost a little bit of ground on the generic ballot against the Republicans coming up in the midterms.

DOWD Well, yeah. And I think we're in April. And I think the president's approval the president's approval now is 42 or 43 percent. It was sitting at 37 or 38. It has bumped up, similar bump up to what happened to Bill Clinton, though Bill Clinton was at a much higher point in time.

I think we should keep in mind as we go through this almost every single mid term is determined by a president's job approval rating, right. It wasn't really fundamentally determined about whatever the message was in 2006, or whatever the message was in 2010, it's always an anti incumbent it's always an anti incumbent presidential move.

If the president's job approval rating is at 42 or 43, and hasn't risen any more, the likelihood that the Democrats take back the house is huge.

RILEY Well, I think that the Republicans are concerned about turnout. And we saw that at Trump's speech to the NRA this week. That was about

getting his base out there even though he's not on the ticket. So, they're not -- the Republicans aren't so much looking at his approval rating, is looking at whether Trump supporters will turn out when Trump isn't running. And that's what that speech was about, saying to the folks you've got to come out, even though I'm not on the ticket.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I wonder if that's an indication of where things are going forward, Jonathan Karl. I mean, there does seem to be a little bit of a disconnect between what the president wants to do for the next several months over this campaign, and what Republicans in the House and the Senate wanted to do.

KARL: The president's political team wants this to be the second Trump election. They want to put Trump on the ballot. They want to make it a referendum on Trump versus Democrats who want to try to impeach Trump.

Do you want Trump or do you want him impeached? That's their argument.

And Republicans that are running this strategy in terms of -- from Capitol Hill, don't necessarily want that. It's a district by district, state by state effort. Some of those candidates will have to distance themselves from Donald Trump. But the Trump political team believes that you have to make this all about -- you have to make this a referendum on impeachment, a referendum on the president.

FINNEY: And the Democrats cannot let that happen because I agree with you that is the way to fire up that base.

And, Matt, I disagree with you. I mean, part of why the messaging from the Democrats does matter is they've got to try to keep the president's numbers as low as they can and create as much of a wedge for Republicans who are either running for re-election or running in these races, as part of what we've seen, the challenge that they've had already in these special elections.

We've got to -- they've got to continue to draw this wedge. And they've got to make it, quite frankly, about, you know, while Republicans are sitting there trying to impeach Rod Rosenstein, they're not talking about your life and your jobs and your health care. And I think at the end of the day...

(CROSSTALK)

DOWD: If the Democrats...

FINNEY: ... that actually matters.

DOWD: Democrats and Republicans are both in a fiction land if they think this race -- this election is not going to be about Donald Trump.

FINNEY: Oh, it's absolutely going to be.

DOWD: 2018 is fundamentally about Donald Trump.

FINNEY: It's absolutely going to be about Donald Trump.

DOWD: And right now the people that strongly disapprove of Donald Trump are almost twice as large as the people that strongly approve of Donald Trump. That's fundamentally the problem for the Republicans this year.

KARL: And by the way, in the midst of all this talk of Mueller and the special counsel, there's the other investigation. There's the Southern District of New York. And if you talk to...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Michael Cohen.

KARL: Michael Cohen. That is the real existential threat to Donald Trump. That is the real threat. They don't know what is there. You could see that the fear is that he will go after the Trump Organization, the Trump Organization, which can be subpoenaed, but cannot be pardoned, cannot take the Fifth.

And who knows what is there. That is the real concern.

RILEY: And we can all conclude now that although Giuliani seems to have been brought on-board here to try to speed up this Mueller investigation and bring it to a conclusion, he has probably done just the opposite. He has probably extended it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That is going to be the last word. Thank you all very much. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And now we honor our fellow Americans who serve and sacrifice. In the month of April, one soldier died overseas supporting operations in Afghanistan.

And that is all for us today. Thanks for sharing part of your Sunday with us. Check out "World News Tonight." And I'll see you tomorrow on GMA.



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